

HOW DEAL WITH FRANCO?

Understanding the Realities of Spain

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THE government of the United States seemingly has decided that, to secure the military defense of Europe against Communism, it is essential that Spain play a role in its plans, and that the Spanish government receive economic and military help. There are many who, being admirers of Franco's authoritarian regime, will receive this news with delight. But there are also many others who will be dismayed, remembering that Franco destroyed the Spanish Republic in a bloody civil war in which he received help from Hitler and Mussolini, and that his present rule is, in almost all respects, antithetical to everything democratic.

Personally, I can take no satisfaction in the thought of cooperating with him. Yet I am willing to concede that Generals Eisenhower, Marshall, and Bradley are not stupid; some

IN AN article in our last issue ("Franco: Proud Ruler of a Hungry People"), Peter Schmid reported on the critical situation in which Spain today finds itself—a land saddled with a corrupt despotism and literally on the verge of starvation. It is this country that we propose to make our ally in the struggle between East and West, to the dismay of the major portion of American liberal opinion. Yet, FRANZ BORKENAU asks here, does that opinion correctly assess the political realities of Spanish life? Mr. Borkenau analyzes the present state of unhappy Spain in the context of its history and social development. Particularly, he considers the questions: Is Franco a fascist? Is his regime totalitarian? What is the potential of democratic reform or reconstruction there? How dependable an ally of the West would Franco make? Mr. Borkenau is the author of *The Spanish Cockpit*, one of the very best books to have been published on the Spanish Civil War. He has also written an authoritative history of the Communist International. His last article in COMMENTARY was "Will Technology Destroy Civilization?" in the January 1951 issue.

of the reasons why they are eager to integrate Spain into plans for defending Europe are clear to anyone who takes the trouble to study a map. Naturally, I am aware that there are many people, especially liberals, of a different opinion. I think I know how they feel, and I respect their motives. But I must say the liberal protests against friendly American gestures toward Franco have shown a mindlessness and plain ignorance that is astonishing. In order to speak seriously about Spanish politics, it is important to know what you are talking about. One's case is never made any stronger by the incessant repetition of mistaken and uninformed arguments.

Cooperation with Franco is distasteful—but this has nothing to do with his alleged role as a "fascist dictator" of a "totalitarian state." True, these are the widely current liberal catchwords, but in dealing with the tragic country that is Spain, we should not be content with catchwords. Spanish history and contemporary Spanish life are quite special, with many unique features—and indeed follow a course unlike that of any other European country; loosely applying the familiar European terms to them can prove most misleading. Is it really beside the point that, from the end of the 16th century onwards, ruler after ruler, regime after regime, have attempted either to transform or to stabilize Spanish political and economic life, and that all of them have been failures? Is it a matter of chance that Spain has remained by far the poorest country of Western Europe and that it has lived always under some kind of despotism—and, since the beginning of the 19th century, always, with the exception of two turbulent and ineffectual interludes, under some kind of military despotism?

To talk glibly about a "progressive" policy for Spain is to evade the facts. These are

complex and do not fall obediently into place when touched by the wand of the "progressive" clichés. That Franco is no democrat, everyone knows. But that does not automatically answer all questions about the nature of his regime and the political possibilities open to Spanish society. And it is these questions that have to be answered before one can sensibly endorse or criticize any particular policy with regard to Spain.

SPAIN is essentially an agricultural country, but her climate is exceedingly arid, in fact the driest in Europe. Where the local conditions are favorable, as in Saragossa, Valencia, and Granada, an industrious population has created a flowering garden, bounteous and beautiful. But in the greater part of Spain it is nature, primarily, that makes for poverty, and the first remedy is not redistribution of the land but irrigation. That, however, would be so immense an undertaking, and so slow in bringing results, as to exceed the capacity of private capital or, indeed, of any exclusively Spanish effort. Large international loans are the only means to a solution, and therefore the question of Spanish irrigation comes under the heading of a Point Four program.

In the meantime, it might be said that redistribution of the land would still do something to relieve the misery of the Spanish peasant. This is simply not true. Agrarian reform can have effect only after, not before, a vast irrigation program. When a map of the average land distribution in Spain is superimposed upon a map of the average rainfall, it will be seen that the various systems of land tenure—small parcels in Galicia, freehold in the Pyrenees, tenant farming in Catalonia, a variety of tenure systems in Valencia, fairly large estates in Castile, latifundia in Andalusia—correspond almost exactly with differences of rainfall. This astonishing coincidence is simply due to the fact that it is the extensive, rather than intensive, kind of soil exploitation which must inevitably go together with dry-farming under conditions of scarcity of capital. Arid regions cannot provide even a modest living for the

laboring farmer. Under present conditions there is scope for agrarian reform in Catalonia (where leases could be improved) and in Galicia (where small holdings should be replaced by larger ones), but very little elsewhere.

The impossibility of any simple and easy scheme of land reform was brought vividly to my attention when, during the first phase of the Spanish Civil War, I saw the Andalusian township of Andujar, in Republican territory. That town, with its twenty thousand inhabitants, had been the scene of frightful bloodshed. First, the Guardia (the civil police) had massacred a large number of "Reds." Then the "Reds" had besieged the village, starved the Guardia and their friends into capitulation, and then killed them to the last man plus all the estate managers (the owners were absentees), lawyers, and any other upper-class persons that could be found. It was an event typical of that region and that phase of the Civil War. Yet when I asked what had happened to the land, everybody seemed amazed at the question, because nobody had thought of doing anything about it. Actually, the six latifundia of the township were still run separately by the same workers and foremen, for the same wages, and with the same grumbling about pennies; the only innovation was that, instead of the dead managers, union secretaries were now the paymasters.

What else could have been done? I believe that if land had been offered to the *brazeros*—as the agricultural laborers are called—they would have refused it. How could they have carried on, without water, without buildings, without agricultural implements, without draft animals, and, last but not least, without the slightest experience in the management of a farm? In other parts of Spain, with different systems of land tenure, the massacres were roughly on the same scale, though there were many variations. But the reluctance of the local peasantry to take full control of the ownerless estates was everywhere the same; and in the regions of tenant farming, where, after the elimination of the owners, rents disappeared automatically, they

were simply replaced by identical government taxes and requisitions.

THE story of Andujar, which stands for hundreds of almost identical cases, can teach us much about the basic reasons for the defeat of the Spanish left. The left, when it came to fulfilling its promises of a better future, had no practical program and could not have had one. It would of course have been possible to collectivize agriculture, a measure strongly advocated by the Anarchists and opposed by the Communists during the Civil War, but state ownership does not make arid land fertile. Actually, there is no country where collectivization would be as easy as in Spain, and in the larger part of the country it could be effected by the stroke of a pen. For there is no country where absentee landlordism is so widespread, and, in the South and Southwest at least, collectivization would simply mean that the present managers would be ordered to deposit the profits of their estates with the civil treasury instead of to the accounts of private individuals. The resulting wealth accruing to the state would be, in national terms, insignificant; and Spanish methods of administration being what they are, most of it would stick to the fingers of officialdom. No wonder, therefore, that of all aspects of the Anarchist program, land collectivization evoked the least response.

However, there were villages in Andalusia like Castro del Rio, an old Anarchist stronghold, that collectivized the land enthusiastically. Those villages, invariably, abolished money at the same time and put a death penalty on its use. In Castro I was physically threatened because I had asked for a cup of coffee—coffee being a sinful bourgeois luxury and water the only natural, and therefore permissible, drink for people not corrupted by religion, submission to the state, and the bourgeois spirit in general. The more militant of the Andalusian Anarchists took these ideals very seriously, and preposterous though they were as social remedies, they were not as ridiculous as might seem in well-watered countries. Extreme as-

ceticism very well suits a society constantly threatened with starvation by an arid climate.

Nor are such attitudes specifically Anarchist in Spain. They are shared by the traditional enemies of the Anarchists, the Carlists—who in their turn have about as little in common with European conservatives as Spanish Anarchists have with European socialists. The essence of Carlism is the total rejection of all that has happened since the 16th century; like the more fervent Anarchists, the Carlists concentrate their hatred on anything that has to do with steam power and the nefarious luxuries it helps to produce; for decades, railways were their chief bugbear. And again it would be a mistake to look for such attitudes only among extremists of the right or left. Their basic assumptions are shared by even the more moderate parties.

Thus, the town of Ciudad Real, in the early phase of the Civil War, was completely in the hands of the Socialists and they had to a large extent collectivized the estates of the surrounding province. Socialist students from the Reforma Agraria office took me out to visit one of these newborn "collectives," which I found to be a poor enough show by European standards. But the students took a different view, and one of them broke out into a panegyric of the Castilian peasant, who could live on next to nothing and demanded little from life. This is a common Spanish boast, but it is also no more than the truth, and this capacity to endure under deprivation is the virtue Spaniards prize most. Gerald Brenan in his *Spanish Labyrinth* pertinently quotes Don Quixote's paean to the Golden Age, when there were no luxuries: people then were so perfect that they lived on acorns.

Whatever the formulas borrowed from the West by the leaders of political parties whose roots—except in Catalonia and the Basque country—are weak in any case, the Spanish people do not think primarily in terms of material improvements. A really thoroughgoing victory of the native Spanish left would probably have involved an attempt to introduce a regime of primitive asceticism

similar to that of the Anabaptists in 16th-century Münster, not to that of Stalin with his Five Year Plans.

THEORETICALLY, industrialization offers a way out of this vicious circle of poverty and utopian fanaticism. But the problems are enormous. Industrialization, in an agricultural country like Spain, is largely a problem of markets—markets in a country whose people live on a subsistence level! Quite characteristically, the savings of the Basque and Catalan bourgeoisie, while feeding local industries, have also to a large extent helped to industrialize Argentina; there could really be no better index of the absence of economic possibilities than the failure of even the most industrious and profit-minded sections of the nation to invest their capital at home. The only way to create a Spanish market that would encourage industrialization is, once again, irrigation.

Another retarding factor is the unsuitableness of the average Castilian and Andalusian for modern business, a lack of economic instinct that is the counterpart of the ascetic and destructive impulses of the common people. Things being what they are, industrialization would give decisive power to Catalans and Basques, and endanger the present primacy of Castile and Andalusia. Thus the conflict of regional loyalties—which, among the woes of Spain, is second only to the dryness of the soil—is intertwined with the problem of industrialization. As a result, Madrid governments are bound to be hostile to an industrialization that would diminish their own relative powers.

BECAUSE the soil is so poor, the climate so hostile, and industry so immature, there is only a small stratum of rich—who are relatively very rich—and a large mass of very poor people, and an abyss divides them. Among the poor must be reckoned, not only millions of landless *brazeros*, millions of peasants living in semi-starvation on plots far below the margin of profitable exploitation, workers toiling with inadequate machinery and for inadequate wages for an in-

adequate market, but also the middle classes—the numerous *caballeros* living on the verge of ruin, borrowing carpets from pawnshops when they expect distinguished visitors. The Spanish middle class is not at all of the kind that can carry out a revolution, found a stable and representative government, and take control of a country's destiny.

The relation between their ruling caste and the mass of Spaniards is only occasionally pushed to the foreground of politics. On the other hand, every Spanish regime has to contend with, and nearly every one of them has been defeated by, not a popular uprising, but the immense difficulty of harmonizing the various interests represented in the thin upper crust. Here two basic misconceptions, almost universally accepted, must be corrected: contrary to what is generally believed, the Spanish Church is not a landowner, and the army is not run by the landed aristocracy.

There still remain before my eyes the puzzled faces of the villagers of at least a dozen places in various parts of Spain who did not know how to answer my questions about Church lands and what had been done with them in the Civil War. The fact is that in Spain there is no Church-owned land whatsoever, not an acre of it—the cabbage plots of the village priests excepted. In 1837, during the first Carlist war, the liberal Premier Mendizabal expropriated the Church lands wholesale and sold them for a song, as was done during the French Revolution, with the difference that in France the richer peasants got a share whereas in Spain the land was bought up almost entirely by the urban commercial classes, and a fairly substantial group of non-aristocratic estate-owners was formed. None of this land was restored to the Church during the subsequent era of clerical reaction. By contrast, sections of the Church—some, not all, episcopal sees, and some, but not by any means all, of the religious orders—acquired large amounts of mobile capital in the form of shares and business investments, thereby becoming, after the Catalan bourgeoisie, the biggest “capitalist” element in Spain. A Church closely

tied to the soil and rooted in feudal property relations would have remained nearer to the mind and heart of the Spanish people. It is the Church's role as banker and investor that has brought her popular hostility, since most Spaniards still hold unconsciously to the medieval view that property in land is right and proper, while investment in business, and especially in finance, is always suspect.

The Spanish army, in contrast to most European armies, has not been an aristocratic body for a long time. Why should an Andalusian or Estremaduran magnate join the army or send his sons into it? He is a king in his own dominions. As for the Spanish *hidalgo*, the poor Castilian country squire immortalized by Cervantes, he is not a Prussian Junker, and serving the state does not seem particularly honorable to him; he generally prefers to starve independently rather than toil as a cog in a machine. It is the Castilian, Andalusian, and Galician middle class, whose *point d'honneur* is less subtle while its hunger for jobs is stronger, that sends its sons into the army, where there is pay without too much work, and social distinction in the bargain. The army and civil service between them employ a large section of the Spanish bourgeoisie—if that term can be applied to a class which lacks any outlet in business for its energies. A look at the list of Franco's generals should be enough to convince the most skeptical that the Spanish high command is not an aristocratic body. The army's lower ranks, naturally, are even more modest in social origin.

The high Church dignitaries, the army generals, and the Andalusian magnates together form the triune galaxy of the Spanish body politic. Far beneath them, the *hidalgos*, the civil service, and the business classes of the North constitute forces to be reckoned with in about the same way as the French government reckoned with similar groups in Louis XIV's age. The main political game has been played, since the end of the 18th century, between Church and army, with the magnates of the South as arbiters. Nevertheless, the chessboard of Spanish politics has in actuality been much more interesting

and the game more complicated than these basic facts would suggest. During the 18th century the Church lost her capacity to rule by mere prestige, and ever since has had to find generals to support her cause; this divided the army into liberals and conservatives. This split in the military, in turn, split the landowners into contending factions. The Church alone remained more or less united in action.

It is hardly necessary to stress the importance of this background for an understanding of any Spanish regime, including Franco's. But at this point it may be opportune to shift our analysis from Spain's domestic to her international relations. Since Franco is so often called a "fascist," it would be worth studying the relation of his regime to other regimes that have been called fascist. Here a major circumstance can provide guidance: Franco's attitude toward the democracies and Axis powers in 1940.

Throughout the Civil War, Franco had proclaimed a more or less fascist ideology: this was the very cheap price he paid for Italian and German support. Nor did he abate in his praise of the totalitarian, or his vilification of the democratic, system when the Civil War was over. But then, after the collapse of France, came the test. Against all expectations, Franco, unlike Mussolini, did not lift a finger in support of the powers that had helped him win his war. Had he thrown his lot in with Hitler's, the Nazis would probably have reached Dakar, there could never have been a North African landing by the Allies, and the Axis would have established a permanent threat to the southern half of the Western hemisphere. Needless to say, Franco was moved not by admiration of the democratic way of life but by a shrewd estimate of the inherent strength and moral and material reserves of the Allied powers. It was probably this same estimate that caused him to give Spanish passage, even though with bureaucratic red tape and other molestation, to thousands of refugees from Nazi terror, including a number of avowed Communists and a large number of Jews.

Shrewd opportunism? Exactly. This indifference toward the central aims of the fascist world movement, this cynicism as to its most sacred ideological tenets, reflects another essential feature of the Franco regime: its nationalist isolationism. This isolationism did not appear only in 1940. It is the red thread running through all of Franco's policies from the end of the Civil War down to the present day. Franco certainly was not averse to picking a few plums for himself if it could be done without much risk. He would have liked to get Tangier, but maneuvered so cautiously that, failing to get it, he yet escaped any unpleasant consequences of the attempt. He has been looking round for international backing and therefore cultivates his connection with the Vatican on the one hand, with Latin America on the other (and, of course, with Portugal's Salazar). But to involve Spain in a conflict beyond its borders—never! Even today, when support from the West is a question of life and death, he has made it clear that he will not consent to the use of Spanish troops outside Spain (where, incidentally, they would not be worth much). In this attitude, if in no other, Franco is the spokesman of the Spanish people and continues a tradition now one hundred and fifty years old. Spain is essentially, deeply, incontrovertibly isolationist. Contemporary Spain, under whatever regime, does not wish to be dragged into the main current of Western growth, expansion, and aggression. This attitude is expressed in Spanish anarchism no less than in Carlism and Falangism.

ASIDE from its paramount practical motive, Franco's isolationism also provides a clue to the understanding of his regime as a whole. Keeping inside one's own house, non-participation in the affairs of the world at large, refusing to be dragged into the whirlpool of modern progress—in other words, trying to establish an island cut off from both the opportunities and dangers of modern industrial society. That is the real Franco program. And it is the natural program of a supreme Catholic Church that can only lose

by opening the floodgates of modernism. Unfortunately, it also happens to be a program stemming quite naturally from the tremendous, almost insurmountable difficulties that Spain must overcome in order to modernize herself. In a sense, the Franco regime, like many Spanish regimes preceding it, makes a virtue of the inevitable (inevitable, that is, without American economic help on a scale not practicable at the present moment).

We have every right, and every reason, to dislike an ideology proclaiming backwardness as an ideal, and even more reason to detest those who praise a narrow, corrupt police regime as if it were the world's eighth wonder. Yet an abyss separates Franco from Hitler or Stalin, and everything depends upon understanding this. For it is the essence of all genuinely totalitarian regimes in our day to strive to be ultra-modern, and sacrifice everything for it. Not only are they driven forward by the ambition to "reach and overreach" American industrial achievement, they also try, for their own security, to build a state machine infinitely more efficient than any other; at the same time their aggressive urges are insatiable and lead inevitably to military ventures outside their own borders.

The difference between Franco on the one hand, and the Nazis and other genuine fascists on the other, reveals itself everywhere, in the structure of their respective regimes, the mechanism of their rule, their social support. Lenin, Mussolini, and Hitler rose as party bosses and mass leaders, Stalin at least as a party boss. Franco, like Kemal, rose as an army leader, has never built a party machine, and has never had the slightest mass appeal. (Tito, too, rose as an army leader rather than as a party organizer, and this greatly affects the structure of his regime.) The Spanish Falange, founded by the younger Primo de Rivera, was never a serious force. Franco, as soon as he was in the saddle, virtually destroyed it. He demoted and arrested dead Primo's successor, Hedilla, and forced the remnants of his organization into a merger with their bitterest enemies, the medievalist Carlists. After that, the Falange was

kept going, partly as a hoax to mislead Mussolini, partly as a gang allowed to run the black market on condition of being politically docile.

Actually all totalitarian movements have risen *against* the traditional upper classes of their respective countries. This is an essential, perhaps even the most essential aspect of totalitarianism as such. The upper classes are the upper classes by virtue of being independent forces able to exert influence upon society and government. Totalitarianism, by contrast, is incompatible with the existence of independent pressure groups. In Germany, the traditional upper classes were the only social force that opposed Hitler, not only individually but, to some extent, as a caste; the conspiracy of July 1944, which was the only serious attempt to overthrow the Nazi regime, developed in their midst. In Italy, where the leveling force of the Fascist mob movement was infinitely weaker than in Germany, the upper classes actually succeeded in getting rid of Mussolini—his fall was entirely due to an upper-class conspiracy, with the monarchy and army at its core—and restoring their own rule.

Next to Salazar, the Franco regime, supported by Church, landed aristocracy, and army, is the purest expression, in all Europe, of reactionary—that is, largely pre-capitalist—forces of the kind that attempted to overthrow Hitler and succeeded in overthrowing Mussolini. The Spanish bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes are too small and too weak either to effect a republican revolution or to form a base for a genuine fascist movement. This is another reason why Franco, in 1940 and later, could not and did not support the Axis. Why should dukes and Catholic archbishops have prayed for Hitler's victory and thereby for their own political and social doom?

THE Franco regime, with its distinctly medieval trends, has all the characteristic faults of Spain: an extreme backwardness, resulting in extreme inefficiency, accompanied by boundless corruption. It will be said that such a regime cannot inspire much con-

fidence as a partner in international politics. That, however, depends on what one wants it as a partner for.

One has only to read the history of Wellington's relations with the Spanish generals to realize that not much can ever be expected from any Spanish force in regular warfare. But it is quite beside the point to evoke, in this context, the specter of a new Chiang Kai-shek debacle. Whether the Spaniards fight or refuse to fight will not be determined by their political regime—the state in Spain has been for centuries an incubus not really belonging to the body of the nation, and the Spaniards, when they fight, do so as patriots but never as citizens. And if they do fight, it will be mainly locally and not much by way of large-scale action.

But whatever the contribution or lack of contribution by the Spanish people, this country of roughly twenty million inhabitants is one of the most easily defensible positions in Europe—granted adequate air and naval support—and lends itself preeminently to the action of small armies such as Wellington provided in the Napoleonic era and the Western powers could provide in a future war. Spain's strategic importance is paramount, since if she is in enemy hands the Mediterranean cannot be held, and troops deeper in Europe would have no rear to retreat to and no base to advance from. The problem is not, therefore, to make the Spaniards fight as a regular army—which they have not done successfully since their defeat at Rocroy in 1643—but to secure the peninsula as an operational base.

And for this, one and only one thing is necessary: not to create conditions that might open the gates to the Communists. But this is exactly what those are doing who insist grandiloquently on the imminent "overthrow" of Franco and the establishment of "democracy." What they forget is that the economic impossibility of effective large-scale social reform and the historic wide gap between the upper and lower classes have always made for harsh governments and frequent revolutions solving nothing. Mostly, the periods of relatively mild government were those when

pressure on the regime was lowest, as during the restoration after 1874. It is noteworthy how far Franco, after all the horror of the early days of his rule, has drifted away from the methods of terrorism. The political history of Spain can be described as an undulation from harsh authoritarianism toward a relative liberalism, from there to blind revolutionary convulsions, and back to the original regime of the hard hand. It is the same kind of cycle with which Americans should be familiar from South American politics. There is no "middle way" without large-scale economic assistance from outside the country—and it is just such assistance that so many American liberals oppose!

For a while it looked as if the Spanish Republic, before 1936, might break the cycle, but the attempt failed; and there is good reason for believing it would have failed even without Axis intervention—after all, it was the International Brigade alone that saved Madrid on November 7, 1936, when the military revolt was still an internal affair. Moreover, there is no doubt in my own mind that, had the revolt been quelled, the ensuing trend would have been toward Anarchist rule, or a civil war between Communists and Anarchists, with the results, in any case, being chaos, violence—and some form of eventual military dictatorship.

A GOOD way to be introduced to the realities of Spanish politics is to look at the career of Francisco Franco himself. Franco comes from a middle-class family, one of the few modern families of Spain. It is amazing that so unconventional a young man, among the unteachable brassheads of the Spanish army, should have succeeded in becoming its youngest general. Within a few years of the final defeat of Abd-el-Krim, he succeeded in doing what none had achieved before: making reliable soldiers out of the rebellious Moors of the Riff. He and his brother Ramon, the latter an internationally famous aviator (also something quite odd in the Spanish army), developed anarcho-syndicalist leanings. During the tragically abortive republican rising of 1930 Ramon attempted

to bomb the royal palace in Madrid single-handed. Both brothers, on the advent of the Republic, offered their services enthusiastically but were soon alienated, partly by the chaos and ineffectualness of the new regime, but at least as much by the success of the new war minister, Azana, in reducing the army. In consequence, the Francos changed their political position.

In 1934 things had reached the point where Gil Robles, the ultra-Catholic war minister of a right-wing government, could call on the unconventional general to suppress the Socialist rising in the Asturias and clean up the mess General Lopez Ochoa had made there. Franco, defying all the traditions of the Spanish infantry, refused to go directly to the North and direct his troops from a hill with the help of binoculars; instead he moved to the telephone room of the Madrid war office, whence he directed the Asturian campaign by means of such unchivalrous modern gadgets as wires and maps. (He showed, incidentally, an equally ungentlemanly familiarity with the building's basement, directing an aide to the place where the maps could be found.)

The defeat of the Asturian rising completed Franco's break with the left and his reconciliation with the old order. Doubtless through Church influence, as is usual in Spain in such cases, a marriage was arranged for him with a Bahamonde girl, offspring of one of the most devoutly Catholic aristocratic families of Galicia. After that General Franco, not at all as a political leader, but as one among several military caudillos—Mola and Sanjurjo took precedence over him, but were both killed very early in the Civil War—became a sword of the reaction, stabilizing his leadership by a blow against the Falange, in 1937. Since then he has been nothing but the head of a *combinazione* of conservatives of various shades, a typically Spanish military dictator.

A very bad administrator, a man without even a claim to being a mass politician, he is yet a very shrewd leader of a heterogeneous team of collaborators and, in the international field, a cunning diplomat. He is a man whose

political function has completely blotted out his original personality, a man who does the contrary of what he once believed in, a man born perhaps to be a fascist or even a Communist general, but transformed by the pressure of social circumstances into the very contrary—a skillful agent of the Church he despises, of the aristocracy he envies, and of army generals who, apparently, find him a little uncanny to this very day.

THE factors securing Franco's regime became very obvious once more, during the recent crisis, when the Socialists attempted to displace him by a restoration of the monarchy—an attempt supported by most of the landed aristocracy, an important section of the Church, some of the generals, and, last but not least, by British and partly by French diplomacy. Franco could of course be ousted at any time by direct military action of the Western powers, but a new regime based upon foreign bayonets could command no support whatsoever and would simply lead to another civil war. The idea was therefore passionately rejected by all Spanish opposition groups. But the alternative of overthrowing Franco from within, by splitting his supporters with the help of moral pressure from abroad, proved equally impracticable.

Aristocracy and Church would on the whole have preferred a monarchy because of their belief in the stabilizing power of monarchical legitimacy. But this principle, borrowed from Metternich and Talleyrand, proved ineffectual in the face of Franco's determination to hold on, and that of a sufficiently substantial part of the army to defend him. When it became apparent that armed rebellion and another civil war would be necessary to oust Franco, the *combinazione* around Prince Don Juan revealed itself as what it was bound to be from the beginning: an attempt merely to install another dictatorship instead of the existing one, and which could not even afford to contemplate anything more radical than a palace *coup*. For in another civil war the ruling caste would

have been split and the gates thrown open to a new upheaval and ultimate Communist penetration of Spain. Faced with such a prospect, the conservative supporters of Don Juan took fright and returned to the Franco fold, while Indalecio Prieto, the Socialist leader, frankly recognizing that his whole policy had been based upon mistaken assumptions, went off to Cuba in despair.

It would seem that in present-day Spain every relatively stable regime, even if it calls itself republican, is constrained to be in effect a military dictatorship. Is there, then, nothing to be done? The answer is—not much, but what can be done will have to be done, for the while at least, through the Franco regime. To the extent that American economic aid soothes the more critical social tensions, to that extent is the regime likely to become less harsh and brutal—and to that extent, too, is the average Spaniard less likely to die of malnutrition. Moreover, to the extent that American aid helps Spain solve the basic problem of irrigation, to that same extent will the possibilities for parliamentary democracy become more real.

BECAUSE Franco is now our ally is no reason for liking him the more, or for ascribing to him—as we did to Stalin during the war, and as many now do to Tito—non-existent virtues. Such self-delusion can only lead to political confusion. Nor should one expect American “influence” to work wonders. It is time, however, that Western liberals ceased their utterly irresponsible talk about a “progressive revolution” in Spain, which means, in plain English, another civil war. Rather than have a repetition of the Civil War, the Spaniards will choose Franco without hesitation. (If anyone doubts this, I recommend that he read Gerald Brenan's recent fine book, *The Face of Spain*.) And if Franco is replaced at all, in the present circumstances, it will be by a royalist junta—which would not really make much of a difference for the ordinary Spaniard—or by a Communist regime, which would be a disaster for Spain and the West alike.